CHICORA FOUNDATION, INC.

PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

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Project: Rhodes Tract, Charleston County, South Carolina

Project Sponsor: Beazer Homes

Agency and Permit Number: None given

Project Location: TMS 2860000001, Charleston County, South Carolina in St. Andrews Parish, owned by Bear Island LLC 2 (Charleston County Register of Deeds, DB 131, pg. 822). No title search was conducted, but it appears that Bear Island LLC 2 has owned the property since 2009.

Field Personnel: Michael Trinkley, Ph.D., RPA

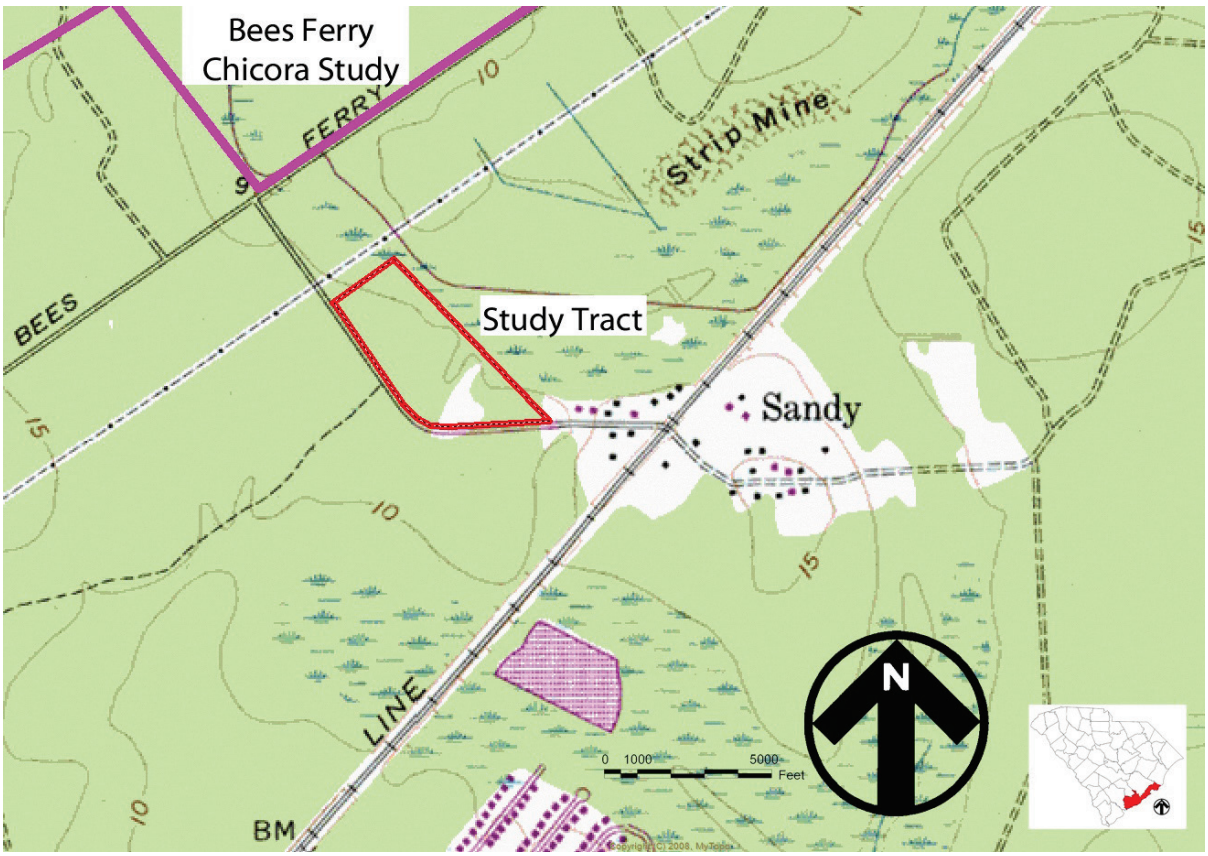

Figure 1. Portion of the Johns Island 1858PR79 topographic map showing the project site.

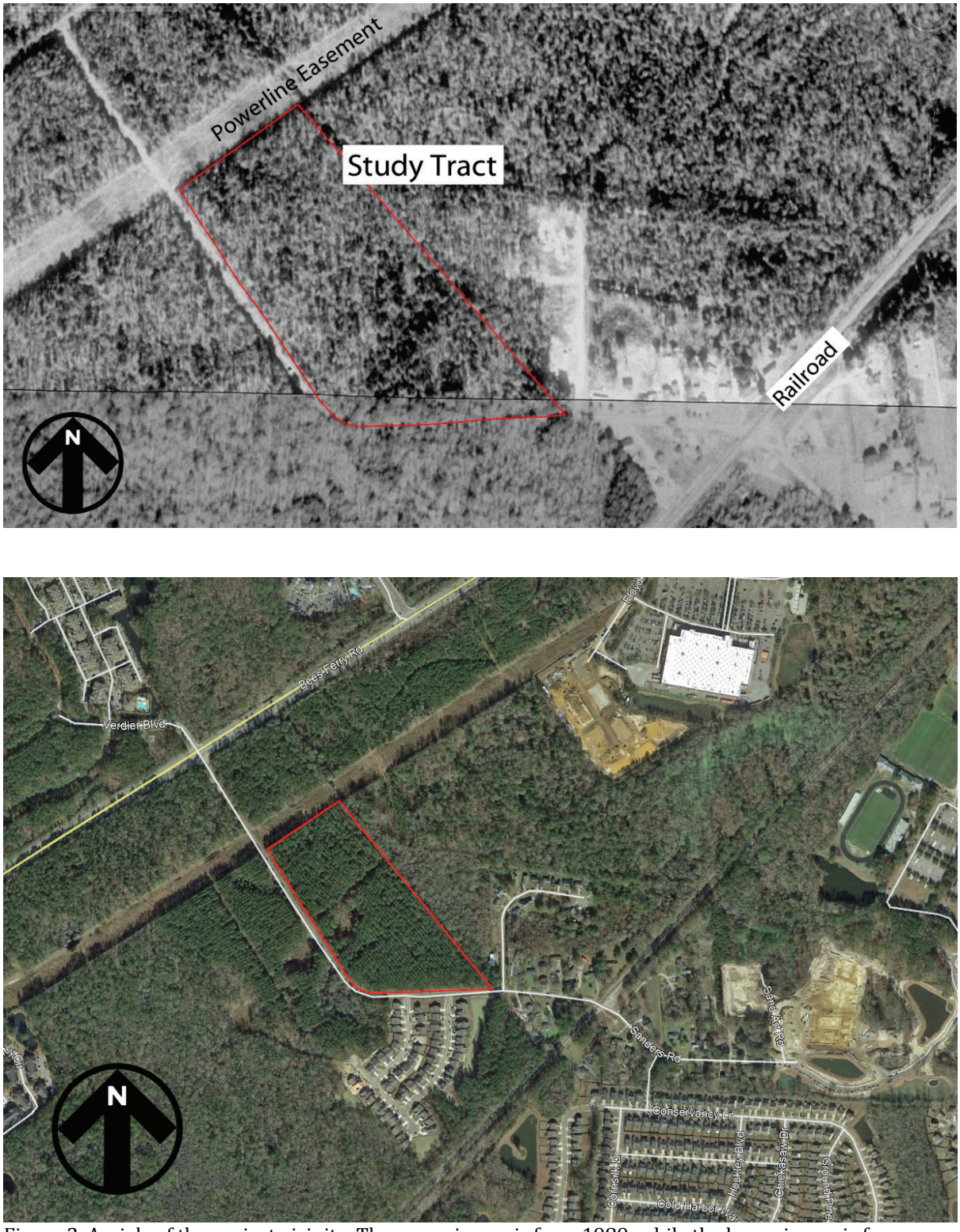

Figure 2. Aerials of the project vicinity. The upper image is from 1989, while the lower image is from 2019.

Date of Survey: November 1, 2019

Objective: To obtain initial historic research that will assist in better understanding the types of archaeological sites present on the tract; to evaluate land use activities and their potential effects on possible archaeological sites; and to identify the areas of the tract that have the highest probability of producing archaeological and/or historical sites (if any).

Survey Description: The survey tract consists of 83.24 acres located east and north of Sanders Road, off Bees Ferry Road. It is bounded to the northwest by a power line corridor and to the northeast by a swampy slough that is part of Church Creek, draining northeastward into the Ashley River. To the south of the property is another unnamed swampy slough and creek that drains to the south, into the Stono River marsh (Figure 1). The Johns Island topographic map, not updated since 1979 gives an unrealistic impression of the property being relatively rural. In fact, this is a heavily developed area with a number of very large housing developments north of Bees Ferry Road and a variety of smaller developments on the south and west sides of Sandy Road. The significant development of the immediate area can be estimated by examination of Figure 2, showing aerials from 1989 and 2019.

Sanders Road extends for about a mile before terminating at a very large construction site owned by the Charleston County School District. Toward the end of Sanders Road, beginning just before its railroad crossing and extending about 0.2 mile is a small single family home residential area identified on the topographic map as Sands. Encompassing this community are two relatively recent roads: Rev. Joseph Heyward Road at the west and Sand Art Road at the east. The remnant of the historic community is found directly on Sanders Road.

Five soil series are present on the parcel. About a third of the acreage, situated in the central area, consists of Edisto Series soils. These tend to be nearly level and are somewhat poorly drained with a seasonal water table 2-3 feet below the surface. Nearly as common are Charleston soils, found in a central area on the road

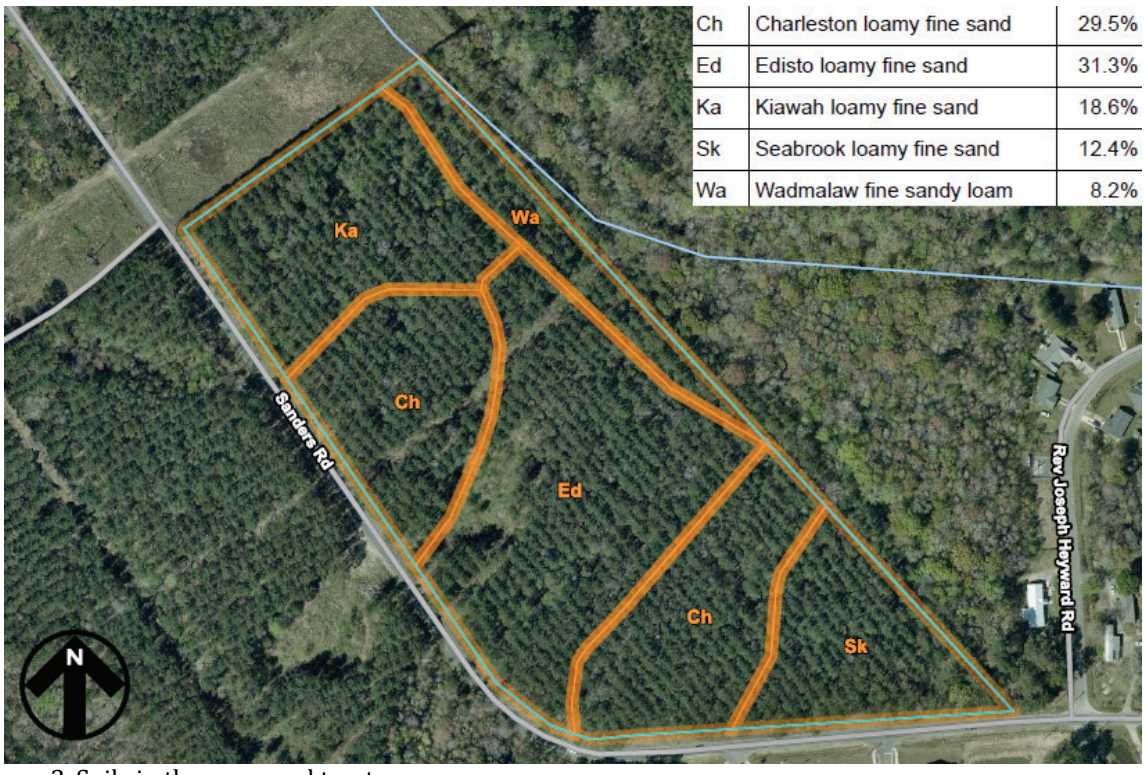

Figure 3. Soils in the proposed tract.

and at the southern end of the property. These soils are more variable, ranging from moderately well drained to somewhat poorly drained – largely dependent on the water table that is from 2 to 5 feet below the surface on a seasonal basis. The Kiawah soils, adjacent to the power line easement, are poorly drained and seasonal water tables may be 1-2 feet below the surface. The Wadmalaw soils are confined to the rear border of the property with the adjacent swamp and, predictably, these soils are poorly drained, with seasonal high water at or within a foot of the surface. Finally, the Seabrook soils, at the furthest southeast tip of the property are moderately well drained, although seasonal water tables may still be found within a couple of feet of the surface.

Given the overall poor drainage, the current planted pines, running parallel with Sanders Road, are all planted on raised beds about 2 feet above the intervening troughs. This additional plowing to form planting beds improves drainage for planted seedlings and is generally performed by a bedding harrow (also called mound disking) that cuts and mounds the soil into a planting row, while creating ditches on either side for drainage (see Schultz 1997:4-7).

Today the tract includes primarily planted pines, with a generally light understory and intermixed hardwoods. At least one area exhibits very limited growth, likely as a result of the wet soils. Topography is uniformly flat, with a nearly imperceptible slope to the north, toward the swampy slough of Church Creek.

Brief Historical Comments: Chicora has conducted multiple projects in this area (for example, the Bees Ferry Reconnaissance to the north [Adams and Trinkley 1994]), but in spite of that work, attempting to identify specific historic parcels is exceedingly difficult unless a detailed title search is conducted – and such work was beyond the scope of this assessment.

The J.T. Kollock Property Map suggests that the property may be on the fringe of the Bolton tract, best known historically for phosphate mining operations. However, readers will observe that just to the southeast is a relatively small parcel identified as Sanders – suggestive of the road name and possibly a late nineteenth century or early twentieth century owner, possibly African American.

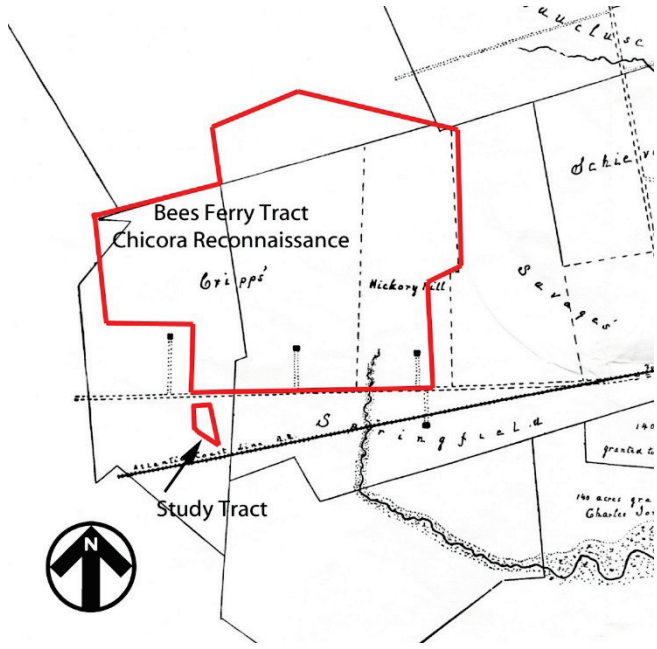

Figure 4. Portion of H.A.M. Smith's (1988) *Plan of the Settlements on the Ashley River* prepared in 1919.

Nevertheless, H.A.M. Smith's (1988) property map suggests, somewhat ambiguously, that the small Rhodes tract may actually have been on what was at one-time known as the Cripp's Plantation (Figure 4). An 1807 plat of that plantation, however, reveals the study tract to most likely be off the tract entirely (the difficulty is the result of attempting to accurately place such a small parcel) (see Figure 5). We believe it was on the adjoining property, identified as "Lands of Thomas Middleton."

The only Thomas Middleton plat that we could quickly locate dates from 1786 and appears, based on the few connecting points, to incorporate the study tract. If this reconstruction is correct, the study area was situated on the edge of Middleton's plantation, in an area that was wooded and evidenced no occupation – likely because of the poor drainage and the need for timber reserves on all plantations.

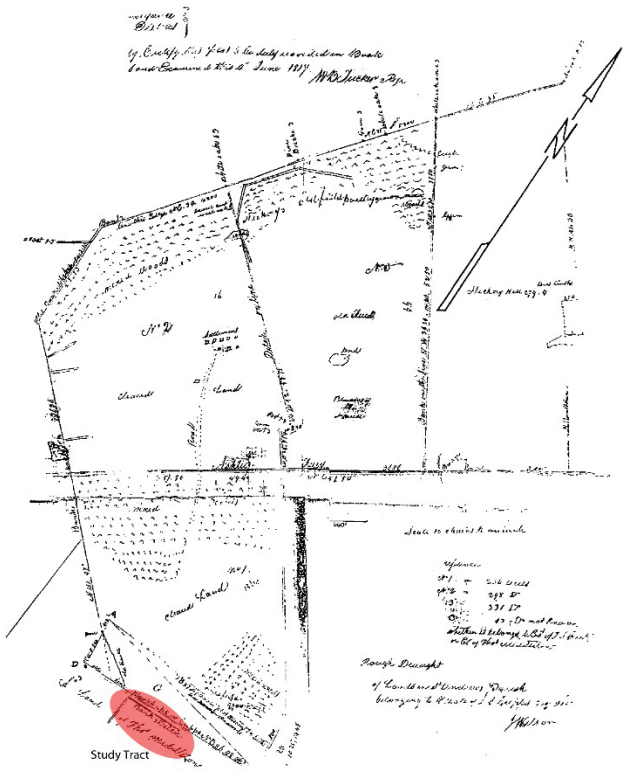

Figure 5. 1817 plat showing the Cripps Plantation, with the study tract highlighted at the lower edge.

However, H.A.M Smith was not incorrect when we identified the area as Bolton Plantation. An 1867 plat of Bolton does, in fact, show that the study tract – and of course the entire Middleton property – had been incorporated into Bolton by that time. By that time, the area was still shown as entirely wooded, providing further evidence that during the historic period the low, wet soils were generally found unattractive for most activities.

Unfortunately, we have not identified a plat that shows phosphate mining in this area, although historically we know it was very prevalent (see, for example, Trinkley and Fick 2006; Rogers 1913:Plate 2; Wyatt 1891:48) and the modern topographic maps continue to show areas of "strip mine."

The vicinity of the study tract is also shown on an 1863 map identifying Confederate fortifications in the area. None are identified on or near the study tract, which continues to be shown in dense woods. It also shows the swampy slough to the north of the parcel.

Figure 9 shows a portion of the 1919 Johns Island War Department topographic map (originally at a scale of 1:21,120, therefore offering more detail than even the modern USGS 7.5' topographic maps). The study tract is in an extensive area of woods, likely representing both poorly drained soils unsuitable for cultivation and waste soils where the phosphate mining so disturbed the landscape that it was no longer suitable for cultivation. The unusual feature to the northeast of the project site may represent the remains of trench mining with the associated backfill. The two extensive swampy areas are clearly shown to the northeast and southwest. Road access to the area today known as Sandy was from the southeast and northeast and all of the structures were situated on the south side of the railroad. By 1944 the topographic map reveals that the road to the area today known as Sandy had been extended across the railroad tracks, but there was still no development and the area was still extensively wooded, with but a few small cultivated areas in the southern area of the parcel – one of which is where the better drained Seabrook soils are located.

We have not been able to determine when the community name Sandy was adopted, although it appears that by 1889, the community of Drayton was present with two businesses: one operated by A.J. Buero and serving as a general store and another operated by Charles H. Drayton and Company as a grocery (R.G. Dun and Company 1889). A 1912 map shows Drayton as a railroad mail and Southern Express stop on the Atlantic Coast Line with a population of 25 (Rand McNally and Company 1912:18). Others, however place the Drayton stop between the Ashley River and Fort Bull, in the vicinity of Drayton Hall (Tom Fetters, personal communication 2019). Perhaps Rand McNally incorrectly placed the stop or, alternatively, its location changed.

Consequently, the historic background, while not providing anything approaching a firm understanding of ownership, does suggest that the area was situated on the periphery of several major plantations with periodic change of ownership, as well as redrawing of boundaries. Throughout, the property appears wooded. After the Civil War, with the introduction of phosphate mining, it is likely that this area was also subject to trench mining.

Figure 6. The 1786 Purcell plat of Thomas Middleton's plantation.

Previously Identified Prehistoric and Historic Sites: ArchSite was examined, using a 500-foot area of potential impacts (APE). This APE was chosen given the proximity of multiple significant developments. No previously recorded archeological sites are found in the area.

There are three historic structures identified east of the railroad, about 2,000 feet from the study tract. These structures, 6725, 6726, and 6727 were identified. Two are dated from the 1970s and all have been determined not eligible for inclusion on the National Register.

Previous Land Use History: We have previously implied that the tract was essentially excess or reserve wooded land for a series of plantation developments. There is little evidence that the nearby swamp was ever cultivated for rice, although this cannot be precluded (see below). Nevertheless, none of the available plats show evidence of settlements in the study area.

In fact, all of the plats and maps examined during this study show the property as wooded.

The earliest aerial image we have access to at present is 1957 and it reveals two areas of cultivation, in the same areas as revealed on the 1944 topographic map (compare the images in Figure 11). The 1957 aerial shows that what is today Sanders Road had been constructed and the much earlier soil road for the Sandy community had been extended and connected with the paved road.

This 1957 aerial is also significant in that it *suggests* the swampy area beyond the project to the northeast may have been diked and planted in rice. There are four lines bisecting the swamp that may represent field boundaries. This deserves further investigation.

By 1989, these cultivated fields have lapsed into woods, but it was not until sometime between 1994 and 2003 that the project area was timbered and new pines planted. Immediate development in the area begins by 2017.

Public Outreach: The only public outreach Chicora conducted was our contact with Tom Fetters for additional information on the Sandy and Drayton railroad stops. It appears that relatively few archaeological surveys have been conducted in the area, in spite of the extensive development. For example, the only investigation north of Bees Ferry Road in this immediate area was Chicora's archaeological reconnaissance, which found several sites, although it does not appear any more detailed investigations were conducted.

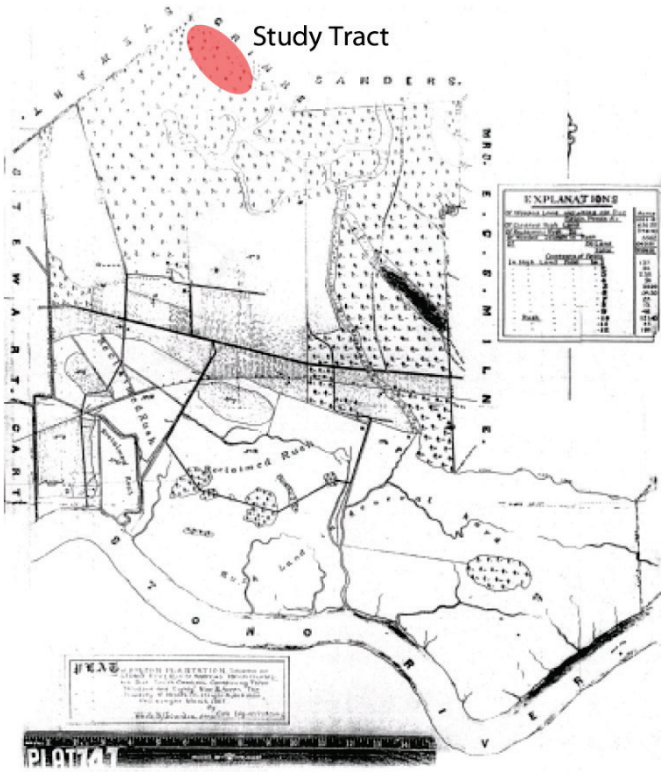

Figure 7. Bolton Plantation in 1867 (McCrady Plat 747).

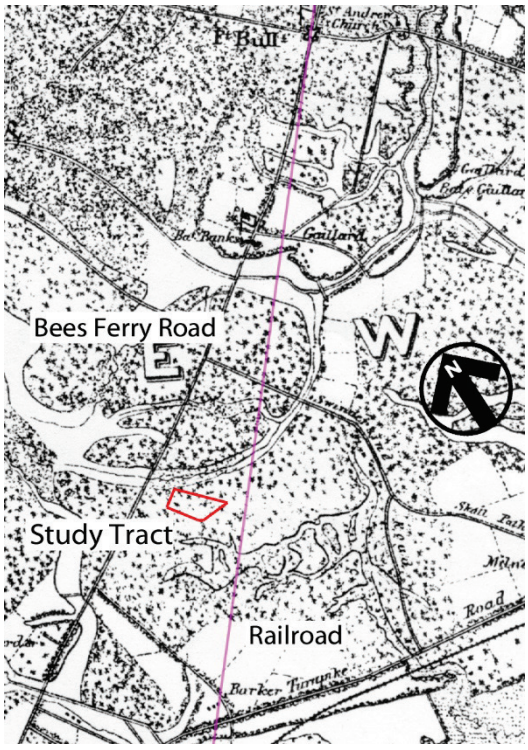

Figure 8. A portion of the 1863 *Map of Charleston and Its Defences.*

Field Investigation: A brief field investigation was conducted (without shovel testing) at the time of this assessment.

Two features stand out. The first is that walking through the property there is a noticeable difference in the soils, with areas of especially damp to wet soils seemingly confirming to the previously discussed soil survey.

The second is that regardless of the soil, in the areas examined, there was distinct evidence of the planting harrow having been used throughout the area of planted pines. This, as discussed, results in mounded soil with ditches on either side and the pines planted on the created higher and better drained ground.

Otherwise, no evidence of cultural remains were found during the brief pedestrian investigation.

A "windshield survey" of Sandy was also conducted and not only are most of the structures modern, but the few that might date earlier (i.e., from the 1970s) are a minor component. Nothing remains of any structures that might have been present in from 1919.

General Findings and Recommendations: No archaeological studies have taken place on the study tract and thus no archaeological sites have been identified, the associated documentation reveals that much of the soil is poorly drained and that the area has historical been retained in woods, typically on the edge of plantation tracts. There is also a possibility that the parcel may have been impacted by phosphate mining, although I observed no open trenches. Combined, this evidence suggests that the property has a very low potential for the recovery of historic archaeological sites.

Likewise, the soil conditions do not favor prehistoric sites, although it is possible that small settlements might be found in proximity to the swamp.

Regardless, the silviculture that has taken place on the property, documented by both aerials and an on-the-ground examination, suggests that any sites – historic or prehistoric – are likely to be badly disturbed and unlikely to retain integrity.

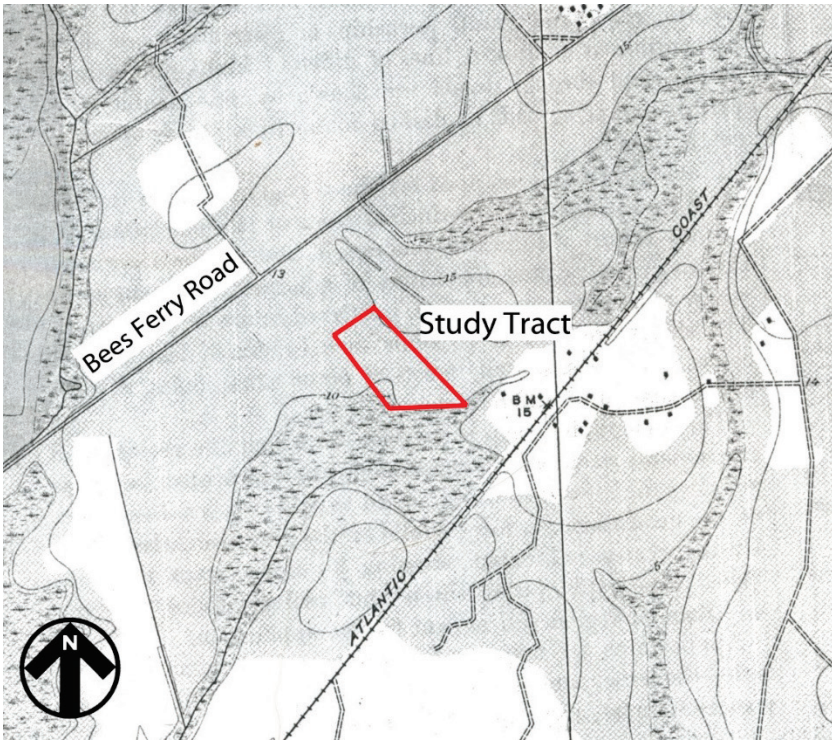

Figure 9. Portion of the 1919 War Department Johns Island topographic map.

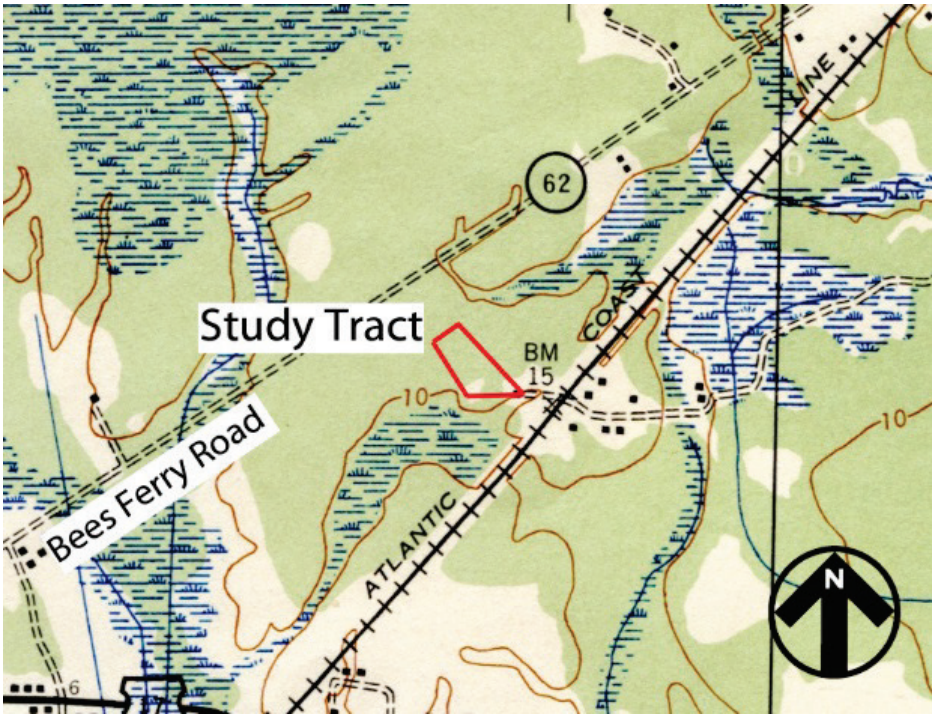

Figure 10. Portion of the 1944 15' Ravenels topographic map.

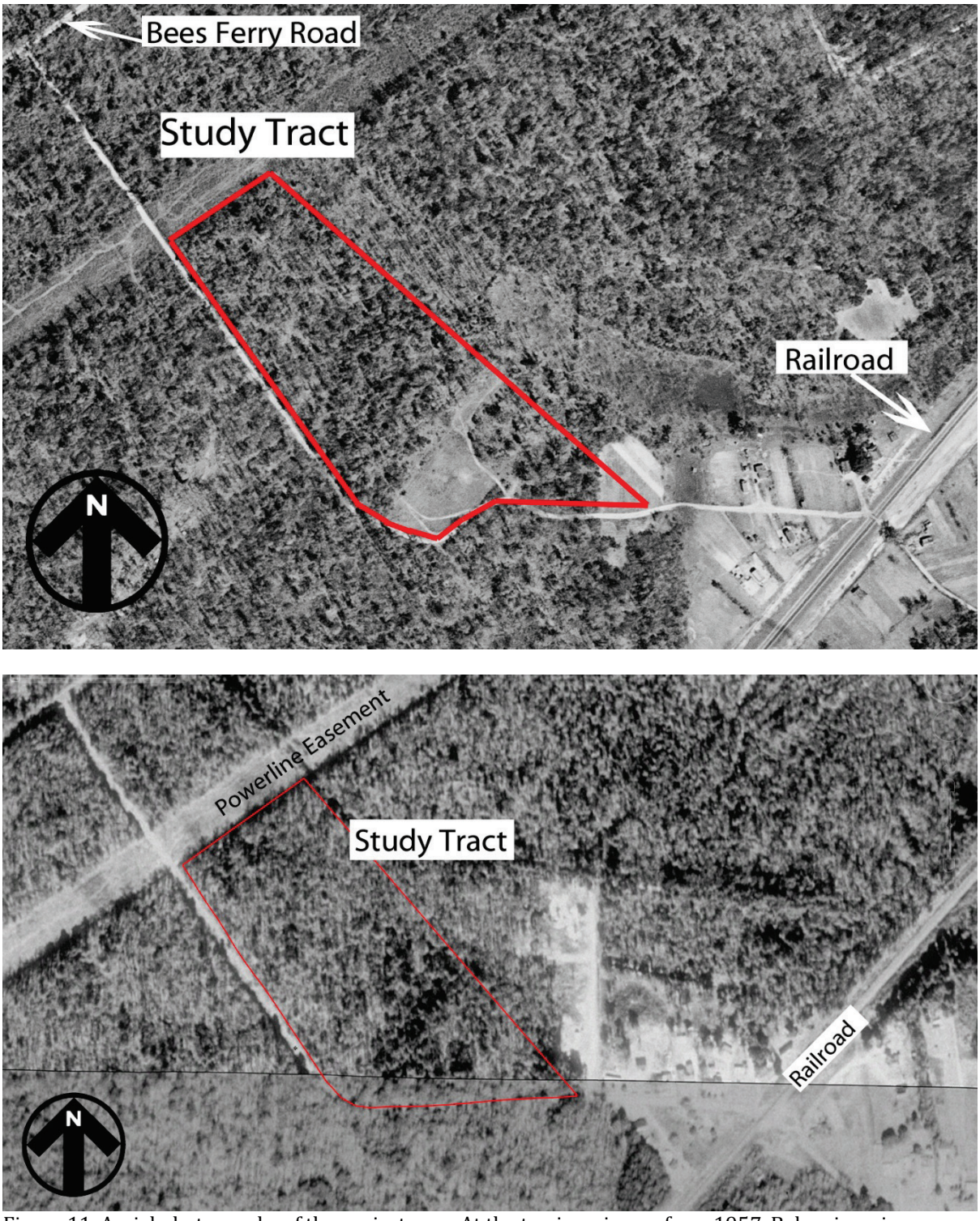

Figure 11. Aerial photographs of the project area. At the top is an image from 1957. Below is an image from 1989. Boundaries are approximate. Compare to Figure 2 for the project are currently.

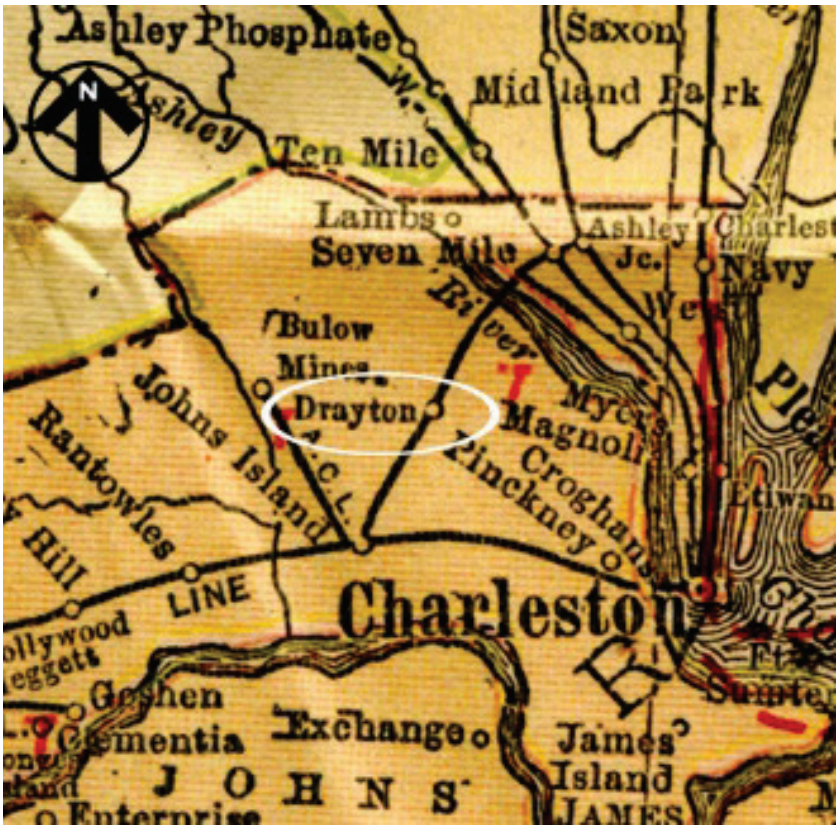

Figure 12. Portion of the Rand-McNally map showing railroad lines and the location of Drayton in 1912.

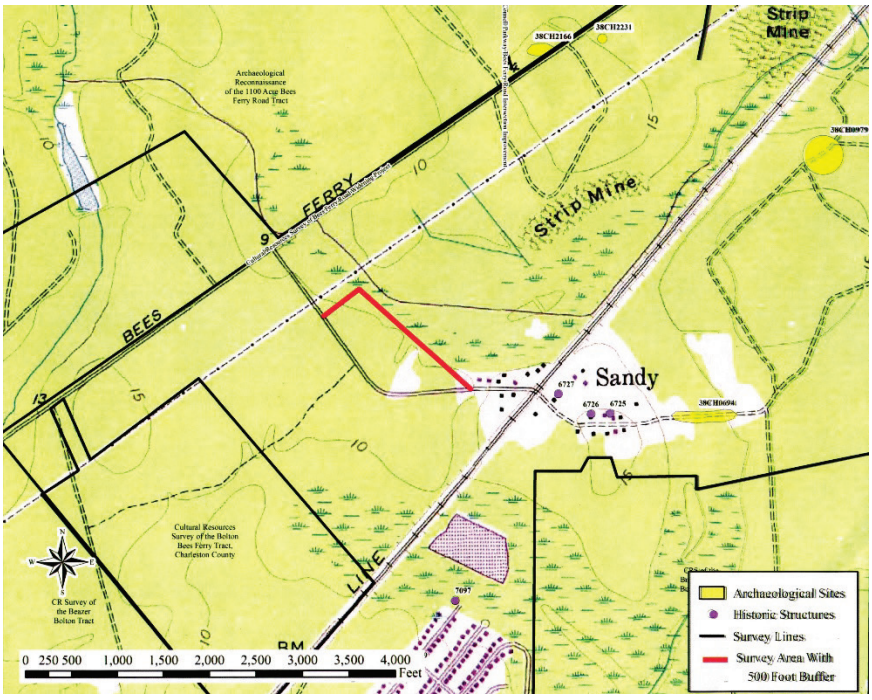

Figure 13. ArchSite map showing the immediate surroundings of the proposed Rhodes tract.

As always, the necessity for an archaeological survey will be dependent on permitting. Should any investigations be required, I would recommend that they be limited to the area in proximity to the slough and on the highest, well-drained soils where cultivation took place in the paste.

Figure 14. Rhodes tract. Upper photo shows the tract from Sanders Road. The lower photo shows one of the wet areas where pines were repaced by hardwoods.

Figure 15. Rhodes tract. Upper photo shows the use of a harrow to mound the pines. The lower photo shows the Sands community, looking north.

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